



April 23, 2019

Governor Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301-4047

**RE: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Appointments for Senate Confirmation**

Dear Governor Brown,

Our organizations were stunned to learn that the proposed slate of appointees to serve on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) follows the same broken model that has repeatedly failed wildlife and failed Oregonians. We discussed Commission appointments with you and your team for months. The proposed slate is a far cry from what we expected after hearing your vision for a diverse, science-oriented body. While we were encouraged to see two women with science backgrounds among the nominees, we were dismayed to see so many appointees who represent the very industries the Commission is supposed to regulate. You have a rare opportunity to transform the Fish and Wildlife Commission and we urge you to appoint diverse candidates that will advance wildlife conservation in the public interest of the entire state.

We believe the Commission should be composed of informed, educated, and thoughtful candidates with natural resources experience who are not directly involved with the industries regulated – people who will prioritize the best available science, who value public process and respect members of the public, and who reflect the values of the majority of Oregonians who do not hunt or fish. We also believe that Commission appointments should reflect principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. This is the only approach consistent with Oregon law, which establishes that each member of the Commission represents the public interest of the state (ORS 496.090(6)). Unfortunately, appointments have long adhered to an unofficial “one seat per interest group model” that allows industry and special interests to drive fish and wildlife policy at the expense of science and the public interest.

We were hopeful that you would provide the necessary leadership to transform the Commission, and we have worked diligently with your staff to identify diverse, forward-looking, science-focused candidates. However, given the current slate of appointees, we must draw your attention to the following issues:

- A majority of the proposed candidates represent industries that push policies that are out of step with Oregon’s conservation values and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s own conservation mission.
- Many of the candidates have taken public positions in opposition to your own policies and values. Your appointees include individuals who support gillnetting in the Columbia River and having guns in schools, and who embrace trophy hunting abroad and in Oregon. One of your candidates also displayed disrespectful treatment and retaliatory action against members of the public and supports the Linn County lawsuit against the State of Oregon, which your Department of Forestry and state attorneys are strenuously opposing in order to defend the state’s ability to manage state forests for a mix of values other than revenue maximization.
- James Nash has a personal conflict because his father is a Wallowa County Commissioner and Treasurer of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association who has been a vocal and powerful opponent of wolf conservation in Oregon. However, we are equally troubled by Mr. Nash’s public advocacy in favor of wolf hunting in Oregon and embrace of trophy hunting. With a simple Google search, our organizations uncovered countless photos of Mr. Nash posing in Africa with dead hippos, crocodiles, sharks, and zebras. Last October, an Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner was forced to resign amid criticisms over his African trophy hunting photos. The issue received national media attention. We have attached articles from the [NY Times](#) and [CNN](#) here, along with similar photos from Mr. Nash’s social media.

- The proposed slate does not meaningfully represent Oregon's changing demographics and does not include any people of color. Further, even if this slate were confirmed by the Senate, there would be only two women serving on the Commission. The only way to advance this slate is to move Commissioner Jim Bittle to the western at large seat, which would require reconfirmation in the Senate and raises the question of whether this extends existing terms. By moving a sitting commissioner to the western at large seat, you would also eliminate an opportunity to select an individual from the state's most diverse candidate pool.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues. We urge you to correct course and assemble a slate of candidates that represents the values of Oregonians in protecting fish and wildlife. We respectfully request that you meet with the undersigned organizations in advance of the Senate Committee on Rules confirmation hearings so we can discuss our concerns in greater detail.

Respectfully,

Bob Sallinger  
Director of Conservation  
Audubon Society of Portland

Nick Cady  
Legal Director  
Cascadia Wildlands

Amaroq Weiss  
Senior West Coast Wolf Advocate  
Center for Biological Diversity

Quinn Read  
Northwest Director  
Defenders of Wildlife

Kelly Peterson  
Senior Oregon State Director  
Humane Society of the United States

Sean Stevens  
Executive Director  
Oregon Wild

Brooks Fahy  
Executive Director  
Predator Defense

Rhett Lawrence  
Conservation Director  
Sierra Club, Oregon Chapter

CC: Senate Committee on Rules

Photos from Fish and Wildlife Commission nominee James Nash's personal Instagram page.



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Selous Game Reserve

6branchoutfitters Finally got my hippo skull back from Africa. First shot was five yards, second shot the gun barrel was touching it. #dangerousgame #hunting #safari #brownpants

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labaredallas Very nice

Issrbts Anddddd, what does the skull look like?

6branchoutfitters @Issrbts it amazing. Come



81 likes

FEBRUARY 16, 2017

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6branchoutfitters It's always worth it to try catching the largest fish available. #sharkweek  
gradyk Oh fuck yea



31 likes

JUNE 28, 2016

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6ranchoutfitters @joerogan, too close to a horse?

gradyk Awesome animal



17 likes

AUGUST 1, 2016

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6ranchoutfitters I was supposed to be back in Africa hunting this week, but unfortunate events kept me and a good friend from being able to go. It's important to keep in mind that Africa is a continent, not a country, and that experiences vary as widely as they might in North America. Believe when I say there are still wild places in Africa. The struggle for life happens at the pointy end of a tooth every day and humans aren't excluded. We found three brass bracelets in this crocodile's stomach.



319 likes

MAY 20, 2018

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## *Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Resigns Amid Criticism Over African Hunting Photos*



Blake Fischer and his wife, Beth, posed with animals killed on a hunting trip in Namibia. He was forced to resign from his position as an Idaho fish and game commissioner on Monday.

Office of Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter

## The New York Times

# *Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Resigns Amid Criticism Over African Hunting Photos*

By **Matt Stevens** and **Sarah Mervosh**

Oct. 15, 2018

A fish and game commissioner in Idaho resigned on Monday after he was sharply criticized over a mass email in which he described killing an array of African animals on a hunting trip and attached pictures of himself with the carcasses.

The Republican governor of Idaho, C. L. Otter, known as Butch, said Monday that he had asked the commissioner, Blake Fischer, to resign and that Mr. Fischer had complied.

“I have high expectations and standards for every appointee in state government,” Mr. Otter said in a statement. “Every member of my administration is expected to exercise good judgment. Commissioner Fischer did not.”

Although the hunting he did in Africa was apparently legal, Mr. Fischer acknowledged in his resignation letter that he had “made some poor judgments” and apologized.

“I did not display an appropriate level of sportsmanship and respect for the animals I harvested,” he said. “While these actions were out of character for me, I fully accept responsibility and feel it is best for the citizens of Idaho and sportsmen and women that I resign my post.”

The email at issue was sent by Mr. Fischer to more than 100 people on Sept. 17 and first surfaced Friday in a report from The Idaho Statesman. The New York Times obtained copies of the email and related correspondence on Monday through a public records request.

In the email, Mr. Fischer described a recent trip to Namibia with his wife, Beth, who was on her first trip to Africa.

“First day she wanted to watch me, and ‘get a feel’ of Africa,” he wrote. “So I shot a whole family of baboons. I think she got the idea quick.” He included a photo of himself grinning next to four baboons, one of which appears to be a bloodied baby.

He went on to describe his other hunting exploits. His wife is shown next to a dead antelope, oryx and waterbuck. He said he also shot a giraffe, shown lying on its side with a rifle propped against his torso, and a leopard, which was draped across a rock.

“I shot a Leopard. Super cool, super lucky,” Mr. Fischer wrote. “The Leopard is one of the big 5, as in one of the 5 animals in Africa that will kill you before you can kill it.”

As one of seven commission members, Mr. Fischer — who was originally appointed to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission in 2014 and was reappointed this June — was “responsible for administering the fish and game policy of the state,” according to the department’s website.

Within a few weeks of Mr. Fischer’s email, at least one former Idaho fish and game commissioner, Fred Trevey, replied to him and called for his resignation “sooner rather than later,” according to other emails obtained by The Times. He accused Mr. Fischer of gratuitously sharing photos and descriptions of kills, violating the spirit of responsible hunting.

“I have a difficult time understanding how a person privileged to be an Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner can view such an action as sportsmanlike and an example to others,” Mr. Trevey wrote.

“I’m sure what you did was legal, however, legal does not make it right,” he added.

Another former commissioner wrote to the governor’s office to say he and other former fish and game commissioners objected to the contents of Mr. Fischer’s email.

Namibia places restrictions on when, where and what people can hunt. Trophy hunting season runs from February through November, and hunters must obtain permits, including special permits for large cats, according to the Namibia Professional Hunting Association.

Trophy hunting is also allowed only on properties where hunters have been granted permission by the landowner, the association says.

Unlike in the United States, where wildlife is considered a public resource, private landowners in Africa more or less have ownership of the wild animals on their property, said John McDonald, past president of The Wildlife Society, an international organization committed to addressing issues that affect wildlife.

That means that landowners can bring in hunters to shoot animals in season, set quotas and fees and supplement the wildlife population on their land by breeding animals and releasing them, he said.

“You would pay the landowner or professional hunter a concession to access the property and then for every animal that you choose to take, you would pay a price for that animal,” Mr. McDonald said.

Roger Phillips, a spokesman for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, said he could not comment about hunting rules outside the state, but said Mr. Fischer’s hunt was legal “as far as we know.”

Constituent mail to the governor’s office was split, with some expressing support and others disdain for Mr. Fischer. While some called on him to “stand strong” and “keep your head up,” others called his actions “appalling” and suggested he has a “tortured mind.”

The episode has echoes of a 2015 controversy, when an online furor erupted after a beloved Zimbabwe lion named Cecil was shot and killed by a Minnesota dentist, Dr. Walter J. Palmer. Thousands of people signed a petition demanding justice for Cecil, and Dr. Palmer closed his dental practice for more than a month after facing threats and harassment. The Zimbabwe government, however, declined to press charges against Dr. Palmer and said his documentation for the hunt had been proper.

To close the email that led to his resignation, Mr. Fischer made a joking nod to the continentwide scale of his hunting prowess.

“After we left all of the animals in Africa that were still alive,” he wrote, “we were on a plane headed home!”

Andrew R. Chow contributed reporting.

*Follow Matt Stevens and Sarah Mervosh on Twitter: @ByMattStevens and @smervosh.*





# Idaho Fish and Game commissioner resigns after bragging about killing a family of baboons

By **AJ Willingham, CNN**

🕒 Updated 12:50 PM ET, Tue October 16, 2018

## Idaho wildlife official facing calls to resign 02:35

**(CNN)** — Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Blake Fischer decided to resign after sharing graphic pictures of his African hunting trip.

In the middle of September, Fischer sent an email to more than 100 friends and colleagues recapping his recent hunting trip to Namibia.

Along with the email, obtained by CNN, Fischer attached 12 pictures of himself and his wife standing over various kills: an oryx, a giraffe, a waterbuck, a leopard and, perhaps most notably, a group of four dead baboons.

He boasted about using the baboon kills to introduce his wife to African game hunting.

"First day she wanted to watch me, and 'get a feel' of Africa," he wrote in the e-mail. "So I shot a whole family of baboons. I think she got the idea quick." One of the animals in the photo appears to be a young baboon, bloodied and propped up on a larger one.

"After we left all of the animals in Africa that were still alive we [sic] pretty happy we were on a plane headed home!" the email concluded.

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COURTESY, IDAHO GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Fischer and his wife posed with several dead animals, including a giraffe and a leopard.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said Monday that he had asked for, and received, Fischer's resignation, according to a statement. "I have high expectations and standards for every appointee in state government. Every member of my administration is expected to exercise good judgment. Commissioner Fischer did not."

Fischer, in an email to Otter, said: "I recently made some poor judgments that resulted in sharing photos of a hunt in which I did not display an appropriate level of sportsmanship and respect for the animals I harvested. While these actions were out of character for me, I fully accept responsibility and feel it is best for the citizens of Idaho and sportsmen and women that I resign my post."

## Concerned former commissioner spoke out

The photos and the tone of Fischer's email left some of his colleagues unsettled, and some past commissioners of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game asked that Fischer step down.

"My reaction to the photo and accompanying text of you smiling and holding a 'family' of primates you killed, dismays and disappoints me," former Commissioner Fred Trevey wrote Fischer in an email. "I have a difficult time understanding how a person privileged to be an Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner can view such an action as sportsmanlike and an example to others."

Trevey said the baboon photo, and the accompanying caption, violated commonly held hunting ethics by describing the nature of the kill in a lurid way, and suggested the photos could tarnish the reputation of the IDFG and the hunting community at large.

"For the good of all, I encourage you to shield the Commission as an institution and hunting as a legitimate tool of wildlife management from the harm that is sure to come," Trevey wrote. "My belief is you should take responsibility and resign sooner rather than later."

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## Other leaders join in

In a subsequent email to Otter's assistant, Tony McDermott claimed at least seven ex-commissioners, including himself, shared Trevey's concerns and the belief that Fischer used "extremely poor judgment."

The message, along with the names of the commissioners who supported the call for Fischer's resignation, eventually reached Otter's attention.

The seven members of the commission are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate to serve staggered four-year terms.

CNN has reached out to Fischer for comment and has yet to get a response. [He told the Idaho Statesman](#) that he "didn't do anything illegal."

"I didn't do anything unethical. I didn't do anything immoral," he added.

*CNN's Artemis Moshtaghian contributed to this report*